

Register

Sign In

Home News Sport Business Innovation Culture Arts Travel Earth Audio Video Live

'We'll make mistakes' says RFK as fired US health staff asked to return

4 April 2025

Share Save

Brandon Drenon
BBC News



Some of the roughly 10,000 employees fired from the Department of Health and Human Services are being asked to come back.

The agency's secretary, Robert F Kennedy Jr, said the mass firings were consistent with the government's goals to purge the federal workforce but said 20% of them were made in error.

"Personnel that should not have been cut, were cut. We're reinstating them. And that was always the plan", he said, adding "we'll make mistakes".

Terminating an entire team dedicated to lead poisoning and prevention at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention was among the mistakes, he said.

The chainsaw approach to shrinking government is being led by tech billionaire Elon Musk and his Department of Government Efficiency (Doge) team.

"Part of the Doge, we talked about this from the beginning, is we're going to do 80% cuts, but 20% of those are going to have to be reinstated, because we'll make mistakes," Kennedy told reporters at a stop in Virginia.

The firings had an instant impact.

The city of Milwaukee, which had been working with the CDC to respond to lead found in the city's water, announced internally this week: "(We) will not be able to continue due to the loss of subject matter experts," according to the BBC's media partner CBS News.

Asked about the lead programme being cut during an event on Thursday, Kennedy said: "There are some programmes that were cut that are being reinstated, and I think that's one of them."

Milwaukee health officials said on Thursday that the department has not been notified whether the CDC lead experts would return, according to CNN.

Workers at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) that had received termination notices have also been asked to return temporarily.

Among those asked to come back are workers in the FDA's inspections and investigations office, US media reports.

Kennedy announced last week that 10,000 workers would be laid off, and through voluntary departures, the workforce would be reduced from 80,000 to 60,000.

In announcing the changes, Kennedy said HHS was "inefficient as a whole" and that the cuts would remove "bureaucratic sprawl".

HHS is a department with a \$1.8 trillion (£1.39 trillion) budget that oversees 13 agencies, including the CDC, the FDA and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

The American public have broadly supported cutting government waste but there have been protests over the way it is being enacted.

Healthcare in the US United States Robert F Kennedy Jr

RELATED

TV's Dr Oz confirmed to lead Medicare and Medicaid

4 Apr 2025 US & Canada

UnitedHealthcare names new boss after former CEO killed

23 Jan 2025 US & Canada

United Health boss defends firm in first earnings results since CEO killing

16 Jan 2025 US & Canada

MORE

2 hrs ago

Trump in excellent cognitive and physical health, says White House doctor

The president has "robust cardiac, pulmonary, neurological, and general physical function," his doctor says.



2 hrs ago US & Canada

6 hrs ago

Trump's iPhone olive branch is a significant trade war retreat

Exempting electronics from US tariffs is a stunning about-turn by the Trump administration after 10 days of chaos.

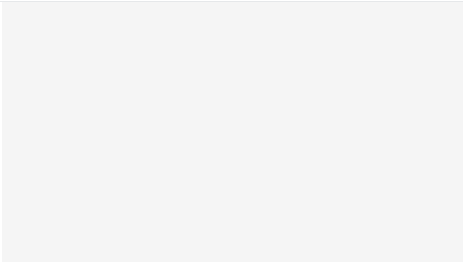


6 hrs ago Business

14 hrs ago

Trump exempts smartphones and computers from new tariffs

It follows concerns that tech prices could skyrocket, as many gadgets are made in China, with the US president saying he will give more detail on Monday.

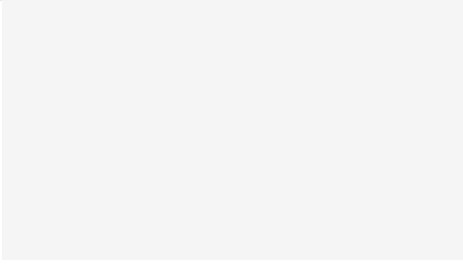


14 hrs ago World

16 hrs ago

Man mistakenly deported to El Salvador 'alive and secure', US says

A judge has called for the Trump administration to facilitate the return of Kilmar Abrego Garcia to the US.

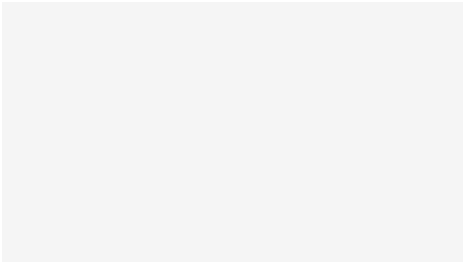


16 hrs ago US & Canada

21 hrs ago

US special envoy meets Putin as Trump urges Russia to 'get moving' on Ukraine ceasefire

Steve Witkoff held talks with the Russian president, meanwhile Moscow's ambassador to the UK told the BBC the US is not Russia's ally.



21 hrs ago World



[Home](#) [News](#) [Sport](#) [Business](#) [Innovation](#) [Culture](#) [Arts](#) [Travel](#) [Earth](#) [Audio](#) [Video](#) [Live](#) [Weather](#) [BBC Shop](#) [BritBox](#)

[BBC in other languages](#) ▼

Follow BBC on:



[Terms of Use](#) [About the BBC](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Cookies](#) [Accessibility Help](#) [Contact the BBC](#) [Advertise with us](#) [Do not share or sell my info](#)

[Contact technical support](#)

Copyright 2025 BBC. All rights reserved. The *BBC* is *not responsible for the content of external sites*. [Read about our approach to external linking](#).